STREET ARCHITECTURE, BELGIUM.

SHOP IN THE SHOE-MARKET, ANTWERP.

In Belgium, as elsewhere, considerable improvement has been lately made in the appearance of structures built for the purposes of trade. The annexed engraving represents a shop recently completed in the *Marché aux Souliers*, at Antwerp, from the design of M. Dens, an architect of the town.*

It needs little description. The windows for the basement story are screened by ornamental open-work, and have above them panels decorated with flowers in enamel. The slender columns, which form the divisions of the shop-front, stand on corbels.

INTÓNACO.—A NEW CEMENT.

In the science of building one of the most important points to be attended to is the quality of the cement used, either for forming the joints, for binding the materials together, or as a plaster for coating the exterior or interior parts of our work. The qualities of such a cement or composition should be, moderate price, quickness and hardness in setting, imperviousness to damp, freedom from exfoliation or destruction by exposure to changes in the atmosphere, and the capability of enduring a powerful heat without cracking or flying off from the surface on which it is spread. It has been reserved for a lady† to make the discovery of a composition for a cement which has many of these properties, and which she secured by a patent, about four years ago. This discovery has been made from long and patient reasoning and research, and from numberless experiments. The whole result of her investigation has been, that "if the constituents of any mineral body of which lime forms a part, be mixed in their true proportions (the lime being perfectly free from carbon), and these mixed with animal and vegetable remains, under circumstances of due moisture and heat, aggregation of their particles will take place at periods, varying with the substances under experiment, from a few minutes, to hours, weeks, and months." It were needless for us here to enter into a description of the several very useful experiments which the inventor instituted to perfect her discovery; suffice it to say, that upon the principle which she has laid down, a valuable and entirely new architectural cement has been composed. To this she has given the name of Intonáco, which is merely the Italian word for wall plaster.

It is of a pure white colour, and when mixed with Roman cement, forms an excellent stone colour. It is capable of receiving good polish, and of maintaining that polish when exposed to changes in the atmosphere. With it imitations of marbles and granites can be formed. It is said to have already proved itself, after a trial of years, to be a cure for damp arising from porosity, or from sea salt. Further, besides as a plaster for walls, it serves admirably for flooring. The flooring in the sunk story should be laid upon brick shivers or coarse gravel, filled in and beaten hard with sand or clay (never with rubbish) up to within an inch of the floor level: *that* inch of Intonáco of the coarsest and cheapest sort will make a floor as firm as sandstone, and it may be jointed or not, at pleasure, to represent tiles. It sets hard in a few hours, and in eight or ten days after finishing, an apartment done with it may be inhabited.

All our plasters shrink in drying; but the Intonáco, instead of shrinking, expands, so that it is necessary to leave a small space between architraves and linings to allow for this expansion. This prevents the lodging of vermin; and it is a curious fact that neither rats nor mice will ever venture to penetrate through this cement. Perhaps one of the most important branches of usefulness for this composition is for the coating of the interior walls of stables. It is well known that common lime used on the walls of stables, combining with the ammonia so copiously thrown off from horses and their litter, forms a compound gas which is totally unfit for respiration, and therefore destructive to the health and life of animals confined in it; and in time the process totally destroys the very substance of the lime itself, so that it crumbles from the surface, and from between the stones of the wall, thus rendering the stables unsightly and unsafe, besides subjecting them to incessant repairs. The experiments that have been made prove that the Intonáco remains unaltered under the action of the most powerfully concentrated ammonia, or any other gas evolved from animal bodies.

Its resistance to fire is not the least of its useful qualities. Half an inch depth of it has been known to protect lath from intense fire for two hours. Perhaps we may be pardoned if we here mention some of the marked peculiarities which are observable in most large conflagrations of houses. These are the constant and rapidly recurring sounds of sharp explosions, resembling those of artillery, which, from the peculiarity of sound, do not arise from the splitting or rending of wood or masons' work: and the effect of these explosions is invariably to accelerate and extend the progress of the conflagration. On close examination by one who has turned his attention to the cause of these explosions, it was found that in a case of a large fire in Manchester some years ago—"A side wall of a warehouse was pulled down, it is presumed with the intention of insulating the fire; a view was thus gained of the interior, where the fire raged fiercely among goods apparently piled in the middle of the floor; three or four

* Our engraving is reduced from an illustration in the *Belgique Commerciale*, an ably-conducted periodical, published weekly.

† Mrs. M. H. Marshall, of Edinburgh.

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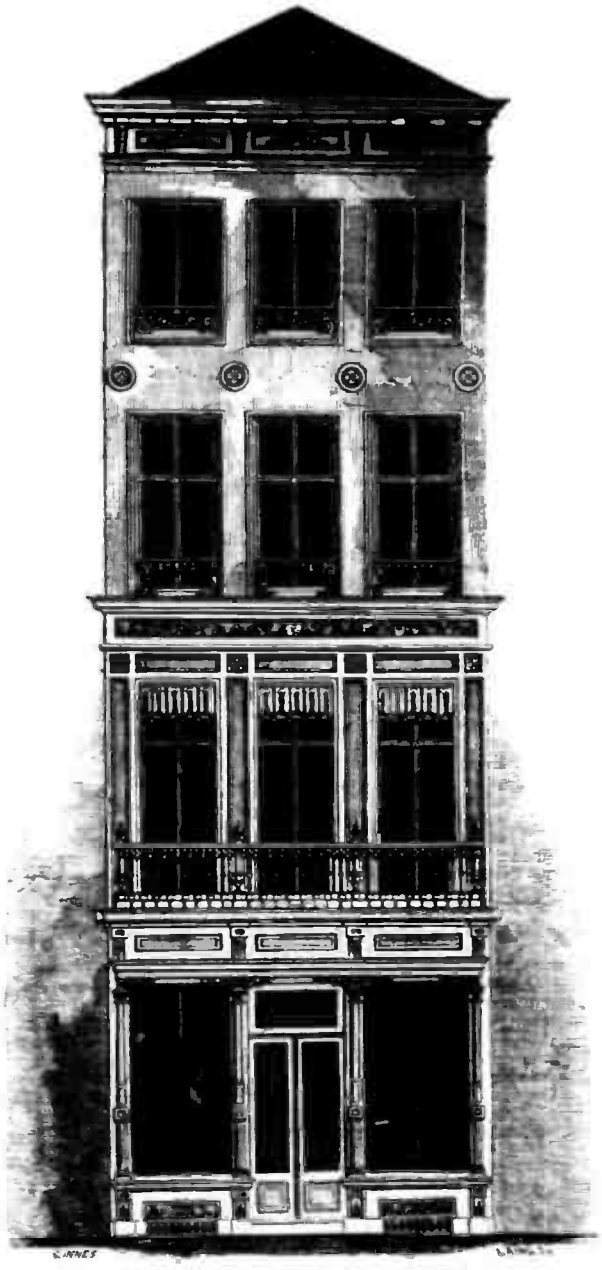

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